

OF BRITISH GUIANA

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osity and rooted to the spot as if hypnotized by the call, while the hunter approached closer for a better shot. Arrows as well as powder and shot are valuable, and no hunter takes any unnecessary risk of losing or breaking his weapons. 224

After the animal has been killed it is trussed up with bush rope for carrying back to the settlement, which may be several hours' distance. The method of trussing varies with the species of animal, but each method is adapted to the species in question so as to make the easiest load possible under the circumstances. If the game is a large animal such as a deer or bush hog, it is disemboweled on the spot, and the parts which are desired cut out. Usually the four quarters and the teeth are taken. If there is a stream near, they are carried there and washed, after which they are trussed up for packing homeward. Smaller animals, such as birds and akuri, are cleaned after they arrive at the settlement. In case the hunter is traveling and he bags a large animal, he builds a fire and a babracote, or smoking frame, on which, before he proceeds on the journey, the meat is smoked after it has been cleaned. In this climate untreated meat spoils within twenty-four hours. 224 251 483

The traps in use on the Barama are the gun or arrow trap, the bird trap, and the noose trap for birds¹, the spring trap for rats (pandaki), and the labba trap. 224 136 262

Among the animal foods which are more or less regularly hunted and eaten are the following:

Accouri, or akuri (Carib, same; *Dasyprocta aguti*).

Labba (Carib, same; *Coelogenys*).

Armadillo (Carib, yesi).

Ant bear (Carib unknown to author; *Myrmecophaga*).

Bush hog: large (Carib, ponjo; *Dicotyles labiatus*); small (Carib, abuya; *D. torquatus*).

Deer of several varieties.²

Turtle of several varieties and their eggs.

Manati (Carib) or sea cow.

Wild honey.

River and land crabs.

Otters or water dogs. (?*Pterura Sambachii*).

¹ Roth, 1924, *An Introductory Study of the Arts, Crafts, and Customs*, Plate 41, Fig. 3, A, B, and C.

² Tibisiri (?*Cervus himilic*).

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The women and children, along the banks or in the water, kill the apparently stupefied fish by slashing them with their cutlasses and knives. The fish are then put in carrying baskets and carried to the picnic spot. For the picnic lunch the smallest specimens only are eaten, usually being roasted over the fire on the ends of fresh green sticks, in the same way in which we roast picnic frankforters. The small fish, from which the heads and scales have not been removed, are then put with a small pepper into a sort of sandwich of cassava bread and eaten with much relish and gay talk, punctuated by the necessity of inserting the fingers in the mouth to remove those bones which cannot be chewed and swallowed. The larger fish are deprived of their scales with the help of a piece of wood which has been sharpened to a chisel edge. Then they are disembowelled, decapitated, and split sagittally along the back without removing the vertebrae or other bones. They are placed in carrying baskets with moist leaves and carried back to the settlement. If the people have a supply of trade salt, a number of slits are made parallel to the ribs and the meat is rubbed thoroughly with salt and placed out in the sun to dry. If there is no salt the meat is slit in the same way and dried over a babracot.

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The wa'u poison is hacked into small chips and these are thrown into the water. Only the heart of the tree is used. The chips are thrown into the water in the evening, several hours being required for the poison to take effect. The next morning the dead fish may be collected. The wa'u is apparently less successful than haiari and is only used in the absence of the latter.

The poison made from konami is called sokoi. The konami leaf is pounded into a mash which is mixed with grated, unsqueezed,

eating it. . . Rotenone is a constituent of the following plants, comprising seven genera of the bean family (Fabaceae or Leguminosae): *Cracca cinerea*, *C. virginiana*, *Derris chinensis*, *D. elliptica*, *D. malaccensis*, *D. polyantha*, *D. uliginosa*, *Lonchocarpus nicoi* (cuba), *Lonchocarpus sp.* (haiari), *L. chrysophyllus* (?) (Nekoe), *Milletia*, *Mundules euborea*, *Ormocarpum*, *Spatholobus roxburghii*. . . Rotenone is now known to be harmless to mammals when taken by mouth, but many early writers on derris spoke of its dangerous poisonous qualities. . . Buckingham in 1930 made numerous tests on dogs, cats, pigs, sheep, cows, chickens with rotenone and with the ether extract of derris. He concluded that, when administered by mouth, pure rotenone produced no visible effects in dogs, cats, pigs, or sheep in doses (for dogs) up to one grain per pound of body weight and expressed the opinion that even larger doses would be harmless." Roark summarises other experiments showing the non-toxic effects of rotenone on mammals, its extremely toxic effects on fish, and its variable effects on various species of insects. It is concluded that rotenone, the poisonous principle of haiari, is a stomach poison, although the physiological effects are not described. On this subject see also Killip, E. P. and Smith, A. C., "The Identity of the South American Fish Poisons, 'Cube' and 'Timbo'." *Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 20, No. 5, March 4, 1930, pp. 74-81; Roark, R. C., "Excerpts from consular correspondence relating to insecticidal and fish-poison plants." U. S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Chemistry and Soils, Insecticide Division, June 1931; Killip, E. P. and Smith, A. C., "The Use of Fish Poisons in South America." *Smithsonian Report for 1930*, pp. 401-408, Washington, 1931.

415 block of wood which preserves their shape. The block is made of
252 konta wood, and before the introduction of tin was studded with
[177] small points of quartz and used as a grater itself. In grating the
woman sits on the ground with her legs folded under her and
places the grater inside the concave surface of a semicylindrical
trough made of one piece of bark. The grater leans against the
side of the trough next to the operator with its long axis perpendicular to the long axis of the trough. The ends of the cylindrical
roots of cassava are assiduously rubbed against the grater until
the whole root is reduced to a white mash in the trough (Plate
3 b). When the grating is completed the matapi or cassava squeezer
is taken down from the cross beam of the house on which it has
[295] been hanging (Plate 9, a). This ingenious device, which has been
described numerous times by travelers in the Guianas and the
Amazon country, is a tube of basketry woven by the men.
When the tube is full it is suspended by a loop at its upper
end from the end of a beam, while through the loop at the
tube's inferior end a long pole is inserted. The end of the pole
is caught under a cross beam tied for the purpose at the proper
height to one of the uprights of the house. A long length of the
pole protrudes through the loop on the opposite side and on this
end the woman sits, so that the pole becomes a lever, actuated by
the weight of the woman, for elongating the matapi. The leverage
thus exerted elongates the tube, reducing its diameter and exerting
on the contents a strong pressure which squeezes out the juice of
[263] the cassava mash. The juice (eshúru) drips into a pot placed
below the inferior end of the matapi and is later boiled to make
cashidpyo (Creole, cassarip), used for flavoring the Carib national
dish, "pepper pot." The poisonous principle in the cassava
juice, hydrocyanic acid, is freed by boiling.

- 251 The squeezing of the cassava mash usually occupies several
hours. After the juice has been completely expressed the mash,
now in the shape of a long cylindrical cake, is removed from the
matapi and placed on the cross beams of the house, above the
fire, to be smoked. It is believed that unsmoked cassava is harsh
and causes one to choke in eating it. As cassava bread is made from
day to day, the required amount of the cylindrical cake is broken
off and pulverized into meal and sifted through a basketry sifter
into a basketry tray (Plate 8, a).

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The "pan" used for baking cassava is, in these days, an iron disc about eighteen inches in diameter obtained from the trading posts. I saw only one example in use of the clay discs formerly employed for this purpose. When ready to bake bread a woman first heats the pan, which is supported on stones above the fire. The fire is reduced to a bed of coals and strips of bark are laid around its circumference, so that a circle of small flames licks the outer edge of the cassava pan, while a bed of hot coals heats the interior. When the pan is at the proper temperature the woman takes her fan, made of basketry, which she uses for blowing the fire, and scoops up a "fan-full" of the sifted cassava and deposits it in a heap in the middle of the pan. Then she works it about with the fan until the pan is covered with an even thickness of meal. The edges are turned inward and smoothed with the fan so that no meal drops off the pan into the fire. As the "bread" bakes, the particles of meal consolidate into a cake. When the cake is considered sufficiently cooked on one side, the fan is inserted under its inferior surface, in the manner of a pancake turner, and the whole cake is deftly flipped over on its other surface. When completed the cassava bread is a disc averaging about fifteen to eighteen inches in diameter, looking somewhat like an immense white pancake. Cakes of different thicknesses are baked, depending upon the taste of the household, and upon the use to which they are to be put. Very thick cakes three quarters to one inch in thickness are distinguished for their soft, succulent, semi-cooked interiors, but are not good as food supplies to be taken on trips or to be kept for a long period, as they tend to mould.

The broad leaves of the plantain tree and of the poro tree are used to wrap the cassava bread for preservation. The arepa and the leaf must both be dry, but if well packed the bread will keep in good condition for three months or more.

In addition to bread and cassarip, starch and two alcoholic drinks, cassiri and paiwari, are made from the cassava. In making the starch (sipipyra) the extracted juice of the cassava is collected in a pot and allowed to stand until the starch has settled to the bottom. The liquid is then poured off and the starch set in the sun where it becomes dry like flour. It may then be mixed in meat broth to make soup, or it may be baked on the cassava pan into cakes, which, however, are usually smaller and thinner than

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241 cassava cakes. The baked starch is called sipipyá keipyo or mimyi.
252 The preparation of cassiri and paiwari is described in the section on stimulants.

245 Plantains (parurune) of two varieties are grown in the fields.
824 The aratan is comparatively small and is distinguished by the fact that the trunk of the tree is black. The taposa has a long thick fruit and a gray trunk. In planting, suckers are taken from the root, put in a hole made with the digging stick, and covered with earth; sometimes wood ashes are put in the bottom of the hole beforehand. The tree bears fruit about ten months later.

[462] Both men and women cooperate in the planting, although only men pick the fruit which is detached from the tree in large bunches like bananas. The fruit may be eaten raw when it is ripe, that is, when the outer skin is yellow. Both ripe and green plantains are boiled. Green roasted plantain is a great delicacy; the skin is removed and the fruit placed in the ashes of the fire; when finished it is split and spread with grease or gravy and eaten with the hands. Finally, the green plantain may be ~~green~~ raw and baked into a thin cake on the cassava pan. A plantain leaf is laid on the pan before the moist mash is spread for baking. The leaf is also in constant use as wrapping material, to wrap cassava cakes, to cover loads in walishas (carrying baskets), and for all purposes in which wrapping material is required.

245 Bananas (paruru) are planted in the same way as plantains
824 and bear in about the same length of time (ten months). Ten
252 varieties are distinguished: the small red banana is called maripyemyu and bears early; the large yellow type is called idinyuku; the largest reddish banana (kyasakore), bears earliest of all the varieties, is black when ripe, and is used mostly for roasting; the large yellow variety is called wepyunsokai and ripens in the middle of the season; the small sour reddish banana, called "sour fig" by the creoles, is called sari arya by the Caribs and is distinguished from the maripyemyu by its tart flavor; the greenish type (ipitakamapo), known as the "apple banana" and the "Cayenne banana" to the creoles, is usually boiled; the black banana is called mekorumyo; the stubby green type is called mutuku; and

245 the medium red variety rejoices in the name of pomere or pomede.

824 Four varieties of pineapple (nana)¹ are grown: kashushipyopo,

¹ *Ananas sativus*.

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THE BARAMA RIVER CARIBS

- 222 The "cabbages," or fresh shoots, of several palms¹
262 Akoyuru seed (*Astrocaryum tucuma*).
137 Arrow root (*Maranta indica*, *Miramosisima*).

263 Such salt as is eaten nowadays is obtained in trade. Some of the older people, however, remember seeing leaves of certain trees burned and the ashes mixed with food as a condiment.

252 **Cooking.** The women of the household cook all food which is
462 eaten at home, although men are able to prepare their own meals when unavoidably detained in the bush. The desire to have the women do the cooking, as well as the other pleasures of connubiality, accounts for the fact that a man going on a long journey will always attempt to have his wife accompany him.

● 251 Uncooked meat may be preserved by salting and by smoking over the fire.

252 Certain foods may be roasted in the ashes, others roasted on the end of a green stick, others baked on the pan, but the most universal way of preparing vegetables and meat is to make them into "pepper pot." In every Carib house a pot will be seen on the fire stones at almost any time of day. Meat and vegetables are cut into small pieces and put into the pot with water and a suitable amount of cashidipyo and set to boil. The cashidipyo lends a slightly acrid or peppery taste to the mess, somewhat like the flavor imparted by Worcestershire sauce.

264 No set times are observed for meals, although food is quite regularly taken upon arising and in the evening. Men and boys eat their fill from the pot alone, after which the females are allowed to stay their hunger with the remainder. One usually squats over the pot with a cake of cassava and a pot of peppers near by. One reaches into the pot with the bare hands and extracts a piece of meat or a vegetable which may be popped into the mouth or may be laid on a piece of cassava bread, which is bent over to make a sandwich. According to the dictates of personal taste a pepper may be included in the sandwich. If one desires the gravy in the bottom of the pot, one soaks a piece of cassava bread in it. When the pot is emptied more ingredients are added without cleaning out the pot. In this way there is always a supply of cooked food on hand, and the constant simmering keeps it from spoiling.

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¹ ?*Oreodora*, *Areca oleracea*, *Euterpe oleracea*. See Schomburgk, 1922-23, *Travels in British Guiana*, Vol. I, p. 33.

354 A sort of lamp or taper is sometimes made of beeswax and cotton. (Lamp, kororeta; beeswax, wawapone.) Yarn is taken from a discarded cotton hammock and made into a coil, which is encased in melted beeswax. The yarn serves as a wick.

417 An adjunct of the house furniture is the drying rack (Carib, 352 aripapone; creole, babracote). On the drying rack, meat is smoked [251] over the fire. Drying racks are also erected outside the house for the purpose of airing and sun-drying cassava bread, split squashes, peppers, and other food. Only two of the patterns mentioned by Roth occur in the Barama country.¹ The three-stick type (Plate 18, b) is made with three sticks stuck into the ground like a tripod, with their tops tied together; about halfway from the ground they support a horizontal frame or rack. The four-upright type is a rectangular horizontal frame or grill supported on four upright forked sticks (Plate 13, a). The drying racks may vary in height and size and, as stated, may be situated inside or outside the house. Their several parts are tied together with bush-rope.

343 As illustrated in the description and plan of the village of Sawari (Figs. 9-12), various subsidiary buildings and out-houses may be associated with the family dwelling. These serve the purposes of kitchen, storehouses, or drink houses, as the case may be.

[341] They are always four-pillar types of less elaborate construction than the dwelling itself, although the design may vary from one of the temporary benab types to the simpler forms of house design, usually without wall plates. Sometimes such a subsidiary house is a former dwelling converted into an outhouse when a newer and more elaborate dwelling is constructed. A structure to which every family aspires is a drink house (kanu'eti). Such a building [445] shelters the kanu, or cassiri barrel, a large trough hollowed out of a single log, in which the drink is allowed to "set," and from which it is served at speers. Families unfortunate enough not to possess a kanu use large pottery jars for holding the drink. In this case the jars are kept in the dwelling house, no special structure being necessary.

231 Numerous wild animals are regularly kept about the house as 136 pets. Among the most important of these is the warakabra, a fowl with the iridescent plumage of a peacock and the abbreviated rump of a guinea hen; these birds set up a warning scream upon

¹ Roth, 1924, *An Introductory Study of the Arts, Crafts, and Customs*, pp. 276-277.

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by Roth,¹ although the design in the weaving is confined to square and rectangular figures produced by twilled technique. They are used for storing clothing and personal effects, and are usually kept closed by a cord which is tied securely around both halves.

A variety of quakes, or general utility baskets (*kuru kuru*), are in use. They are practically all open wickerwork of the hexagonal pattern, without decoration (Plate 22, a). They all have hexagonal bases, and the details of their construction may be obtained in Roth.² Occasionally these baskets are provided with handles. They are for the most part used for storing cassava and other vegetable products.

No other basketry or plaited articles than those described above were observed on the Barama. Fish traps and basketry water bottles, found in other parts of the colony, are not in use here.

Feather-working. This is not one of the arts of the Caribs. Feathers are used on arrows, they are stuck in the hair occasionally as decoration, tufts of feathers may be used in making decorative pendants, and tufts of white powis down are sometimes stuck with honey to the forehead as decoration, but elaborate headdresses, armlets, and so forth, made of feathers, are not to be found in this region.

TRANSPORTATION

THE Caribs have no beasts of burden or wheeled vehicles, so that all transportation depends in the last analysis upon the strength and endurance of the human body.

Land Transport. On land all goods to be transported must be carried on human backs. Radiating from each settlement are a number of trails leading off into the bush, which are followed by men when hunting. Below the falls at Towakaima, the connection between different settlements is usually made by river. The village may be located from one to fifteen miles back from the river by trail, but to reach a neighboring settlement, it is necessary to take the path to the riverside and proceed by canoe to the landing place of the settlement which is to be visited. The three Kariako settlements and Parapimai are connected by trail, as are

¹ Roth, 1924. *An Introductory Study of the Arts, Crafts, and Customs*, p. 345.

² Roth, 1924. *An Introductory Study of the Arts, Crafts, and Customs*, p. 322, ff.

556 the accumulation of wealth has little correlation with social status.
422 There are certain material essentials, which have been described in
511 our chapters on material culture, and these every household must possess if it is to survive. The list of these essentials is not large, as compared with the possessions of more complex cultures; but it must be remembered that the major part of the Carib possessions are really essentials, there are few luxuries in the catalogue of Carib material culture. Thus, the accumulation of essential goods is merely a matter of convenience, the goods have little social connotation in themselves. A man may have two bows, so that he will not be inconvenienced should one break, but he would consider it a foolish waste of time to make a dozen bows. He would have no use for them, and he would add nothing to his prestige (in fact, would damage his reputation for intelligence) in the eyes of his fellows by possessing such a surplus.

556 One of the reasons for the surprisingly considerate treatment
461 which Indians receive from outsiders in this region is the fact that the latter have been forced to recognize that beyond a certain point, the mere possession of property means nothing to the Caribs. Every gold digger, lumber operator, and balata bleeder who has traveled on the Barama will tell you of the difficulty he has in keeping his Indian boatmen and laborers at work. "An Indian will work only until he gets what he wants and then he will quit cold," is a common observation. Consequently, anyone who relies on a native crew must depend upon the personal relations which he establishes with his workmen to a larger extent than the trade goods which he can give them.

● 251 Accumulations of food are likewise of little significance to the Caribs, for two reasons: the climate does not permit prolonged preservation of native food products, and daily supplies of food are readily available to the competent hunter and agriculturist, though not without a certain amount of effort, it is true. Cassava bread is the only food product which can be kept over a period of months, and such preservation is resorted to only in cases of necessity, inasmuch as the flavor of the product is adversely affected by storage.

301 A small number of luxuries are held in esteem by the Caribs.
511 Among those which they produce themselves are necklaces of teeth and seeds, cotton fillets, bracelets, and other ornaments.